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ABSTRACT

A random sample of 1,109 secondary schools in the 13 southern states was chosen for this questionnaire survey. Each school received a principal's questionnaire and a speech teacher's questionnaire. A total of 889 usable questionnaires (40%) was returned. Results from the survey indicate the extent and nature of speech courses, teacher qualifications, activities offered in extracurricular speech programs, student participation in such programs, and attitudes of secondary school principals toward speech education. (Author/AA)

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Curricular and Extra-Curricular Speech in Secondary Schools of the South

by Randall Capps and Robert Brady

This article is a survey of secondary schools in the thirteen southern states. The survey shows what speech subjects are taught and to what extent. Teacher qualifications are described. The study shows what events are offered in extra-curricular programs and the extent of student participation in such programs. Finally, the survey shows the attitudes of secondary school principals toward speech education.

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Curricular and Extra-Curricular Speech in Secondary Schools of the South

Introduction

Many researchers have concerned themselves with the status of speech education in the various states.[1] Other writers have examined broad multi-state college and university programs. Still others have studied secondary school debate and/or forensic programs on a regional level[2] and a recent study focused on a national survey of high school forensic programs.[3]

An early study reported on the status of speech training in the secondary schools in the South.[4] That study which dealt primarily with the curriculum showed that only five of the thirteen Southern states had separate courses in speech. In the other nine states some speech was offered as a part of the English curriculum.

Although professionals in the field of speech communication have made repeated requests for the establishment of a profile of the quantity and quality of speech education at all levels,[5] no attempt has been made to begin such an endeavor. Because of the need for such research, this study represents part of a national professional effort. This study centers in the area of speech education, curricular and extra-curricular

in the high schools of those Southern states which comprise the membership of the Southern Speech Communication Association.[6]

By its nature, high school training can provide speech education to a higher percentage of citizens than college training. To be effective, secondary school training also should be studied because of current societal trends in education. Examples of such trends included the proposal to televise national Congressional debates[7] and also the advent of rhetorically-oriented citizen-advocates, such as Ralph Nader. Effective high school speech training can prepare the citizenry to understand and to utilize such speech-oriented activities.

Because of a lack of information regarding speech communication programs in secondary schools of the South, the present study was designed to answer the following questions:

1) What speech subjects are taught and to what extent?
2) What are the qualifications of the teachers?
3) What is the nature and extent of extra-curricular forensic programs and activities?
4) What are the attitudes of secondary school principals toward speech education and extra-currucular programs?

Methodology

In mid November, 1974, packets containing questionnaires were mailed to principals of 1,109 secondary high schools in thirteen Southern states. A standardized ACT national high school listing was secured to randomly select the subjects for this study. The total high school sample was determined by computing proportions based on the total population of each state. In essence, the sample roughly totaled one out of every seven high schools in the south. Each packet, sent to the

principal, contained two different questionnaires and corresponding cover letters. To facilitate returns, two stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher accompanied each of the instruments. Each form letter basically described the scope, nature, and intent of the study while asking for prompt return of the questionnaire. Each of the packets was addressed to a principal with a request for a speech teacher to be selected at random to complete the teacher questionnaire. In both cases, the respondents' anonymity was guaranteed. To determine the extent of existing programs, no attempt was made to select only those schools offering either speech courses or forensic activities.

A total of 889 questionnaires (40%) was returned from the random sample. The number of respondents from each state was approximately equal to the total sample. The figure (889) reflects a breakdown of 526 principals (47.4%) and 363 speech teachers (33%). Of the instruments returned, non-usable replies amounted to 2%-principal and 5%-teacher which were not included in the initial data analysis.

All questionnaires were carefully edited and the responses were recoded into numerical punches for electronic processing.[8] Standard descriptive statistics were computed for nominal and continuous level data.

As was noted previously, two descriptive questionnaires mailed to the principal and speech teacher of each school, formed the basis for measurement. The two page principal instrument consisted of twelve questions (16 variables) to provide additional information about speech education and forensics from an administrative perspective. A five page questionnaire distributed to the speech teacher contained thirty-six questions (91 variables) to elicit the largest portion of the survey

data.

Extensive pilot runs were administered to speech professors and students to ascertain the clarity and answerability of the questionnaire. Additional testing was conducted on area high school speech teachers and principals enrolled in summer school courses at Western Kentucky University. After careful scrutiny and further testing, the questionnaires were considered to possess a functional design for clarity and simplicity in analysis.

Results

This research provides data regarding the status and scope of speech education and forensic programs in the south. Additionally, the survey presents information on teacher characteristics. By also surveying high school principals, some inferences can be drawn about administrators' attitudes toward speech communication and extracurricular programs. The researchers feel the results are generalizable to the whole population with some qualifications. While the teacher return (33%) could be taken to limit the generalizability of the data, the population could not exhibit a 100% return. As the principal data indicates, only 58% of the schools surveyed offered a speech course. Results are reported individually for the principal and speech teacher with noted categorical breakdowns.

Schools and Offerings

Of the questionnaires returned, 40.8 per cent came from schools with an enrollment of less than 500; schools with an enrollment between 501 and 1000 represented 31.9 per cent and 27.3 per cent came from schools with more than 1000.

It should be of interest to professionals in speech education that 57.5 per cent of the respondents indicated that a speech course is offered while it was not offered at 42.5 per cent of the schools.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the school sizes and the percentage in each group offering speech courses and forensics programs.

(Insert Table 1 About Here)

Principal Attitudes Toward Speech

In many schools principals play a very influential role in determing the course offerings. Table 2 shows reasons given by principals for their schools failing to offer a course in speech.

(Insert Table 2 About Here)

Speech is traditionally an elective course offering in secondary schools. One question attempted to determine the individuals who influence students in their selection of courses. Table 3 indicates the people responsible for advising students regarding elective course selection. The percentage figure represents the number of schools where that type of advising occurs. Since guidance counselors are responsible for advising studetns at 58.6 per cent of the schools, it is important for these persons to have an understanding of the field of speech communication.

(Insert Table 3 About Here)

Principals generally agreed that both speech classes and forensics have the greatest appeal for the above average segment of the school population. Data in Table 4 bear out feelings of many educators that forensics activities are particularly suited for the intellectual elite.

(Insert Table 4 About Here)

In general principals are satisfied with both speech courses and forensics programs. They were slightly less satisfied with the speech courses than with the forensics programs. This might be due to the highly visible nature of forensics activities. Table 5 shows the degree of satisfaction principals feel toward these programs.

(Insert Table 5 About Here)

Forensics

Forensics programs are alive and flourishing in secondary schools in the south. Competitive speech programs are offered at 50.2 per cent of the schools responding to the questionnaire and 49.8 per cent do not offer such programs. One healthy aspect of forensic programs is the fact that interest in them has increased since 1970 at 60 per cent of the schools. Interest has remained the same at 20.2 per cent of the schools and declined at 19.4 per cent.

Forensics programs flourish despite the lack of financial support provided by the school administration. No budget is provided by 50.9 per cent of the schools which have such programs. An inadequate budget is provided by 22.9 per cent and only 26 per cent provide what the forensics director considers adequate support. The range of support available runs from nothing to a high of $6400. The average for all schools is $311.48.

Teachers generally direct the forensics programs in addition to teaching a full load. Only 10.9 per cent of the schools provide a teaching reduction for the program director. Another 32.7 per cent provides a stipend for the director and 4.5 per cent provides both a load reduction and stipend. More than half of the schools, 51.9 per cent, provide neither released time nor extra stipends.

Most forensics programs involve a relatively small number of participants. At 60.9 per cent of the schools 25 or fewer students participated; at 21.1 per cent of the schools the number of participants fell between 26 and 50. Only 17.9 per cent of the schools had 50 or more participants.

Forensics programs, originally almost exclusively debate, have changed their composition and now 65.5 per cent of the schools have more participants in individual events than debate. Only 12.1 per cent have more participants in debate and 22.4 per cent of the programs are equally divided between debate and individual events. Table 6 shows the events offered in the extra-curricular programs. The table also shows the percentage of schools offering a given event and the average number of participants in that event at those schools which offer it.

(Insert Table 6 About Here)

The number of tournaments attended ranged from 0 to 25 with the average being 6.7. The percentage of schools offering credit for participation is fairly small, 30.5 per cent, while 69.5 per cent do not allow credit for the activity.

Speech Courses

Speech courses in the schools surveyed are offered in a variety of ways. Table 7 shows the types of ways in which the subject is scheduled.

(Insert Table 7 About Here)

The types of courses varies widely with public speaking being offered most. Table 8 shows the percentage of schools offering various types of speech courses.

(Insert Table 8 About Here)

The high school speech course is required for graduation at only 8.7 per cent of the schools while it is not a requirement at 91.3 per cent. Teachers generally are dissatisfied with textbooks available for the course. Only 38.9 per cent were pleased with the textbooks while 61.1 per cent expressed dissatisfaction. Enrollment in speech courses represents only a small percentage of the total students. At 37.7 per cent of the schools fewer than 25 students enroll; between 26 and 50 enroll at 21.1 per cent; between 51 and 74 take the course at 13.5 per cent and more than 75 enroll at 26.6 per cent of the schools.

Teacher Characteristics

As the qualifications for teachers in general have improved, so have the qualifications of teachers of speech. Only 2 per cent of the teachers responding have less than a 4-year degree. Almost two-thirds, 63.4 per cent of the teachers reported the B.A. or B.S. as their highest earned degree. Almost one-third of the teachers, 32.6 per cent had earned the M.A. or M.S. No teachers had earned a doctorate and 2 per cent listed other degrees (i.e., the B.F.A.). As would be expected teachers assigned to speech have a variety of majors and minors. Table 9 shows the colleges from which speech teachers graduated and Table 10 shows the percentage of teachers who have undergraduate majors in speech/drama and English or graduate degrees in the fields.

(Insert Table 9 About Here)

(Insert Table 10 About Here)

Despite the fact that much progress has been made in certification in most states, a large percentage of speech instruction is still done by persons trained in English. This may help account for the fact that speech enrollment is relatively low at the secondary level. Another

factor which may influence enrollment in speech courses is the feelings teachers have for the subject they teach. Only 49.8 per cent of the teachers in the survey indicated that speech was their major teaching interest while 50.2 per cent would prefer teaching other subjects.

Conclusion

This study has dealt with the secondary school speech program in the South. The study attempted to show the status of curricular and extra-curricular speech in the schools studied. After examining the data the following inferences can be drawn:

1. Some form of speech education is present in almost 60% of southern high schools. However, enrollment in speech classes is usually small and limited to public speaking. In schools where speech is not offered, the major reason for not having such a class is lack of trained teachers. Where speech is offered, principals generally are pleased with the instruction.

2. Most teachers assigned to teach speech have a degree with only 2 per cent of them having less than a four-year degree. Only 53.6 per cent of the teachers have a major or minor at the bachelor's level and only 30 per cent at the graduate level. This helps account for the fact that more schools have oral interpretation than any other speech event in forensics programs.

3. Forensics programs are offered in half of the schools surveyed. Interest in such programs has increased since 1970. These programs typically consist of debate, interpretation and various forms of public speaking. These programs are viewed by both principals and teachers as appealing primarily to average and above average students.

Much progress has been made in secondary schools of the South since

1937 when only five states offered separate courses in speech. Despite the progress which has occurred, there is still much room for expansion of speech programs.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Representative of such studies is: Bobby R. Patton and David Cropp, "A Survey of Speech Activities in Secondary Schools in Kansas, 1969-70," Central States Speech Journal, 21 (Fall 1970), 191-195.

[2]Carol Stein, "Intercollegiate Forensics in the South," Southern Speech Journal, 39 (Spring 1964), 224-231.

[3]Betty Anderson and Irene Matlon, "A Description of High School Forensic Programs: Report on a National Survey," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 10 (Winter 1974), 121-126.

[4]Harley A. Smith, "The Status of Speech Training in the Secondary Schools of the South," Quarterly Journal of Speech (February 1938), 95-101.

[5]Michael H. Prosser, "The Status of Speech in New York," Today's Speech, 17 (May 1969), 66.

[6]Those thirteen states are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

[7]_____, "Senate Likely to Consider Live Broadcast Coverage of its Proceedings," Broadcasting 85 (July 9, 1973), 35.

[8]Students were employed to recode the responses onto general purpose forms for use in an IBM Optical Mark Scanner which, in turn, scored the computer punch cards.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Schools Offering Speech Courses and Forensic Programs

Size school (Number of students enrolled)	Percentage offering speech courses	Percentage offering Forensics program
less than 500	47.5	37.1
501-1000	56.8	44.7
1001 or more	73.5	77.5

TABLE 2

Reasons for Speech Not Being Offered

Reasons given	Percentage
No teacher available	31
Material is covered in English class	23.2
Extra Curricular activities provide instruction in speech	3.7
Insufficient interest from students	23.2
Other	18.9

TABLE 3

Persons Responsible for Advising Secondary School Students Concerning Course Selection

Type Individual	Percentage
Faculty	14.3
Guidance Counselors	58.5
Principal	8.5
Other students	4.8
Other	13.9

TABLE 4

The Appeal of Speech and Forensics to Students with Varying Ability (Shown in percentages)

Level student	Speech Class	Forensics
Below average	3.0	0.9
Average	42.5	16.5
Above average	41.3	68.6
Average and above both	13.2	14.0

TABLE 5

Feelings of Principals Towards Speech Courses and Forensics Programs (shown in percentages)

Degree of satisfaction	For Speech Courses	For Forensics
Very unsatisfactory	4.0	3.3
Unsatisfactory	8.3	7.7
Satisfactory	51.6	46.7
Very satisfactory	31.4	37.0
Uncertain	4.7	5.3

TABLE 6

Events Offered in Forensics Programs

Event	Percentage of schools offering the event	Average number of participants
After dinner speaking	12.6	6.9
Analysis of public address	7.7	10.7
Broadcast announcing	15.5	4.1
Debate	66.9	10.2
Discussion	17.9	14.0
Duet acting	52.4	9.8
Extemporaneous speaking	75.1	7.1
Impromptu	41.1	8.3
Interpretation	83.9	11.3
Oratory	57.5	5.9
Public speaking	38.1	11.9
Storytelling	18.6	6.2
Student congress	24.6	12.6

TABLE 7

Types of Scheduling Used for Speech Courses
(Some schools used more than one method of scheduling speech courses)

Type of offering	Percentage
One semester course	32.5
A year course	52.8
Part of phase elective English	20.9
Extra-curricular only	10.4
Other	9.1

TABLE 8

Types of Speech Courses Offered

Types of courses	Percentage schools offering this course
Public speaking	69.5
Interpretation	25.8
Debate	37.7
Theatre	42.3
Other	21.5

TABLE 9

Colleges in Which Speech Teachers Were Trained

Type college	Undergraduate major percentage	Masters degree percentage
Business	2.6	7.0
Applied arts	2.6	.9
Education	6.4	18.6
Science	3.4	.9
Arts/Humanities	85.0	72.6

TABLE 10

Percentage of English, Speech/Drama Majors and Minors

Training	Undergraduate Majors	Undergraduate Minors	Masters
English	47	26.2	34.2
Speech/Drama	30.5	23.1	29.9